

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

Department of State Press Conference on Manchuria

Secretary of State Stimson, Washington, September 19, 1931

**Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Current Information
(McDermott) of the Press Conference on September 19, 1931
[Extract]**

China. Secretary Stimson said that the news received by the Department concerning the occurrences at Mukden, Manchuria, substantially confirmed the press despatches. The contents of the telegrams to the Department have been conveyed to the press, not for attribution to the Department of State, because the news contained therein was from Chinese sources. Asked if the telegrams to the Department substantiated this morning's press reports concerning the capture of Mukden by the Japanese, the Secretary replied that Mukden appeared to have been taken by Japanese soldiers against the opposition of their Government representatives. The Secretary said, furthermore, that from the press despatches and the telegraphic despatches received by the Department it appears to be perfectly clear that the incident was caused by the action of the soldiers against the efforts of the representatives of their Government at Mukden. The Secretary said that he was merely giving the correspondents the reports he had received to date and which, so far, had not been contradicted. A correspondent here observed that when Polish soldiers captured a Lithuanian town they gave out the same story. In reply, Mr. Stimson said he did not remember the details of the Lithuanian incident.

Asked then if the incident in Mukden came under the provisions of the Four-Power Pacific Treaty, the Secretary said he thought not and that, judging from the despatches received, it was not a clash of Governments, but a clash of subordinates of Governments, and that it would not, therefore, come under either the Kellogg Pact or any of the other Treaties. A correspondent then observed that clashes between governments usually grow out of smaller things. In reply, Mr. Stimson said it might lead to something that would call for the invocation of the Kellogg Pact or other Treaties, but it certainly is not yet an act of war by one Government against another, according to the press despatches. The Secretary here said that his remarks were not for attribution to himself or to the Department of State and that they were for guidance only. A correspondent then said he thought he had a right to know whether the United States viewed this incident as coming under the provisions of any of the Treaties above mentioned. He was informed, in reply, that the Secretary had given him all he

was entitled to know and that the information given above was merely for his guidance. The correspondent then said that the public was not interested in his (the correspondent's) view and that it is interested in the views of the Department of State. The correspondent then asked if he could obtain some statement which he could publish on the authority of the Department of State. Mr. Stimson then said that our information was very imperfect and that the correspondents were trying to make him jump before he was ready. The correspondent then said that he was not attempting to do such a thing or to do anything that would be unfair to the Secretary of State. In reply, Mr. Stimson said he did not mean to use the word "unfair", but the fact of the matter is we are just beginning to receive despatches from the disturbed area. Anyone who has the facts probably would reach the same conclusion which the Department has, which is that so far the matter does not involve the two Governments and is not, therefore, under the provisions of the Kellogg Pact. The correspondent then said that the above statement was proper news and interesting to the reading public because of the great interest in the Kellogg Pact. Mr. Stimson then said that the correspondents might use the following for attribution: The Department is following the matter carefully, but on the news thus far received there seems to be no ground for indicating any violation of the Kellogg Pact.

Asked if the United States has any extensive commercial interests in the region around Mukden, the Secretary said he understood our trade with that district was small.

M. J. McDERMOTT

Source

United States Department of State, *United States Department of State/ Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1931*, pp. 15-16

<http://digioll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1931v03.p0126&id=FRUS.FRUS1931v03&isize=text>